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## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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## THE KINGDOM WITHIN.

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"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—Rom., xiv., 17.

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This passage occurs in a chapter which is written to dissuade men from acting the part of religious critics. It cannot be said that men are indifferent to religion in other folks. It is only to religion in themselves that they are comparatively indifferent. Men are accustomed to criticise each other's church service, ceremonies, ordinances, conversations, and everything that appertains to the ministration of religion. They are sometimes so bent upon this that they lose the very spirit of religion, which is charity. The apostle dissuades everybody from it, saying,

"Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother?"

You need not be afraid that men are not going to be judged. God will take care of that. Do you take care of your own soul.

"We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died."

This is a dead question with us, because we have never been accustomed to eat meat, or pour out wine, or have sacrificial blood in our services; but to the Jewish mind, not emancipated into the liberty which these forms prefigure, it became a very important matter; and Paul, preaching Christ



to his brethren at Rome and elsewhere, attempted, all the time, to extricate them from the externals of religion, and to root and ground them in the inside spirit of it; and he says to them, finally, "The kingdom of God is not sacrificial meat and drink; it is not ceremonial observances; it is *righteousness*." By that term we mean everything that comes under integrity or righteousness of life, in all our relations with our fellow men. That is a part of the kingdom of God—living right and acting right toward ourselves and toward those around about us, in all the infinite ways in which we are associated with them.

"Joy in the Holy Ghost," means that joy which comes from our moral sentiments, inspired and aroused by the Spirit of the living God—for when God's soul comes in contact with human souls it kindles in them their noblest nature, and brings forth from their higher faculties a transcendent experience.

Now, what is the kingdom of God? That question determines another, namely—What is religion? It is a vital question, therefore. Everybody is disputing as to what religion is. Everybody is attempting to show that religion is that which he thinks it to be, and that those who differ from him are all wrong.

It is a humiliating fact that disputes on the subject of religion, as they have carried with them the weightiest parts of men's natures—their moral sentiments—have been the most cruel, the most divisive, and well-nigh the most destructive of all disputes that have taken place on the face of the globe.

A little spring comes out from the side of a mountain, pure and cool. Two men are determined that that spring shall be kept perfectly pure and drinkable. One wants it to be done in one way, and the other in another way; and they are so zealous to keep the spring pure that they get to quarreling about it, and tramp through it, and make it muddy. They defile it in their very zeal to keep it pure; and the water flows down turbid and unfit to drink.

Now, men are so determined to glorify God that they act like the devil. They are so determined that charity shall

prevail that they slay men. They are so determined that a kind Spirit shall exist that they will not have a word to say to a man who does not believe in their catechism. They are so determined that the world shall be generous that they stir up all manner of corrupting appetites and passions. They condemn their fellow men, saying, "Well, they are not orthodox. They are not true believers. They do not belong to the true church. There are no covenants for them."

So, under one pretense and another, the great Christian brotherhood, through the ages past, has been turmoiled and distracted; and the world has seen the spectacle of anything but what God meant to establish in the world. The church, by which he meant to make known his manifold wisdom, has made manifest narrowness, sectarianism, selfishness, unjust partialities, and all manner of irritable jealousies. It has not made manifest the beauty of God, the sweetness of Christ Jesus, nor the love of the Spirit. It is a fact which I think can be stated without fear of contradiction, that the general aspect of religion, as presented by churches throughout Christendom, is not winning and attractive, and that the "beauty of holiness," of which the Scriptures speak, has not yet blossomed out in the world.

We are not left at all to guess at what religion is. It is identical, of course, with the kingdom of heaven. When Christ was asked when the kingdom of God should come, he said, "That kingdom cometh not with observation. You seem to think that the trumpet shall sound, some day; that a great crowd will appear on the horizon, and that men will say, 'Lo! lo! look! there they come!' You think that the kingdom of God is to be an outward kingdom, and that everybody will be on tip-toe to see it. You think it will be a kingdom having visible forms. But the kingdom of God is never going to be anything that you can look at. It is never going to be anything that can be discerned by the bodily senses. The kingdom of God is within you."

It is within us. Therefore it must be some mental condition. It is a state of the mind—employing the term *mind* as including the whole soul.

In our text this is specified more particularly. "The

kingdom of God," it says, "is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This puts the finger of definition precisely on what it is to have an inward state of mind which produces right-living, peace, and joy.

The kingdom of God is a soul-kingdom, then. Why was it called a kingdom at all? Well, since a man's disposition is the fountain from which all his enjoyments that are worth having spring in this world, the condition of the soul becomes a kingdom in the sense that it represents to men the idea of felicity. The old notions were that a king was about the happiest man on earth. Therefore there came to be the phrase, "Happy as a king." Kings are usually very miserable; but the popular apprehension has been that they were very happy. It has been thought that to be at the head of a kingdom was the highest state of which men are usually able to conceive. Therefore in the description of the disposition, which is the soul-kingdom, it is called a king's dominion, or a kingdom. But there is a more important reason—namely, that a king in his kingdom dominates, controls, governs. It is the disposition of men, their character, that controls. Their enjoyment, all their life, depends upon what they are in themselves, and inside of themselves. If a man's soul is one that works itself out in righteousness, in peace, in joy in the Holy Ghost, that is the dominating influence which controls the whole life.

Now, I aver, that men are happy in the exact proportion in which their dispositions are qualified to make happiness. This is a truism which nobody believes. You have heard it stated as a maxim, you have had it told you by father and mother, but the truth of it has not impressed itself upon your mind. Moral proserers have said to you, again and again, "Be good and you will be happy," but you do not believe it. Nevertheless, the enjoyment of men is in the ratio in which they have a right inward condition. A man who has right feelings and right dispositions either finds happiness or makes it. It will happen to a man who is all right in himself. He either finds life a blessing, or he makes it a blessing. A man who is in good health, who has a right temperament, all of whose dispositions are noble, and who is hopeful,



courageous, and cheerful, loving God and loving men, thanks nobody for making him happy: he is happy of himself. The human soul was just as much made to produce happiness as a music-box was made to produce music. If it be in a right and normal condition, harmonized with God, with the spirit-world, for which we are being trained, and with men, then it is happy. The soul must needs produce its own happiness out of the harmony of its own condition; but men do not believe in this. You will find young men saying, "If I were as rich as Vanderbilt, would not I enjoy myself?" Do you enjoy yourself now? "No—oh, no." Then you would not then. A man can tell whether he is going to enjoy himself in any anticipated period by the way in which he takes life now. A man who despises little things will, when he comes to big things, have his ideas so enlarged that he will despise the larger as much as he did the smaller.

You may take a well-made, well-accorded piano, and put it into the most squalid house that was ever built, and it will give forth noble sounds. You may put a girl at the keys who does not know how to play the piano, to practice her rudimentary lessons, and still in her drumming there will be something that is worth hearing. The quality of the sounds will be sweet, though there may be a lack of harmonization. On the other hand, you may take one of these old tinkling, shattered, broken-down pianos, such as are stored away in warerooms or garrets, and you may put it in one of the most magnificent of saloons, and you may place Beethoven at the keys, and he cannot bring out anything that is worth listening to. The instrument itself being poor and meager and lean, it is incapable of giving forth sweet sounds even under the most favorable circumstances.

I meet men of whom the same thing is true. They are so proud, so selfish, so mean, that if God should play on them they would not make anything but jangling discords. They are of themselves incapable of producing harmony. Then again I meet persons of whom the opposite is true. I have met women who were so poor that poverty could not board with them, and yet they were happy, and they made those happy who came near them. The essential quality of their

nature and disposition was such that wherever it gave out tones they were sweet, they were pure, they were blessed.

A man makes his own happiness. You may come to the mountains, and if you are a complaining, dissatisfied man at home, grumbling at your wife, at your children, at your servants, at everybody and everything, thinking that nothing is good enough for you because a little prosperity has puffed you up, and feeling that you are a little God walking about the world, and that nobody does his duty unless he burns incense to you—if you are such a man as that, you may come here, or you may go to the most splendid watering place, and you will grumble at the book-keeper; you will grumble at the servants, up-stairs and down; you will grumble everywhere and at everybody. If you were put into a palace, and you had everything that money could buy, you would be miserable. Everything would be vitiated by your own bad nature.

On the other hand, you may take a man who is gracious and kind, who does not think of himself more highly than he ought to think, who looks upon his fellow-men with sympathy and with geniality, and who desires to do good and to make others happy—you may take such a man and put him wherever you please, and he will produce happiness, content, satisfaction.

Now, the kingdom of God consists of a man's disposition in so far as each individual is concerned. The kingdom of heaven is that state in which men are divinely enlightened. It is not a great objective kingdom. It is in each one of us; and it means a state or disposition. It means the character. If you have the kingdom of God within you, then you have religion; but if you have a religion which has no righteousness, no peace, and no joy in the Holy Ghost, then you have a false religion, and not the kingdom of God within you. The kingdom of God in a man's heart signifies the moral character of that man's disposition; and it becomes a very important thing to know what that disposition is.

A great many people think that religion is crying over one's sins, or getting rid of them; but that is the accident, or, I might say the incident, of religion. The implements



and the processes of religion are confounded with the thing itself.

Religion means simply the ennobled condition of all a man's faculties; his intellect, his moral feelings and his social instincts all being harmonized with the universal law of love, harmonized with God's heart, and harmonized with each other, so that his whole nature is high, luminous, sweet, and joy-producing to him, and to those around about him.

A great many persons think that religion has about this birth: that men live about as they are a mind to, and have a good time; that they hear a powerful sermon; that they are convicted of sin; that their minds are terribly wrought upon by the sense of their sinfulness; that they wallow in darkness for a while under conviction; that the time comes when their struggles are over; that the impression is produced upon them that they are converted; and that they rejoice and go on their way singing. They think they must join the church, and they join it. They think that they must keep Sunday, and go to meeting, and perform all the external offices which the church requires; and they do these things; and then they feel, "What lack I yet? I am a Christian man."

Well, every one of these things is right and good in its place, I admit; but what are you going to say of men who do not have any such experiences? What are you going to say of a child that is brought up by Christian parents; that never fell into the slough of evil pleasure; that has always been accustomed to regulate its life by the gospel; that has a well-tempered constitution, and a well-balanced mind; that has been trained into Christian ways; and that never knew a time when it was overwhelmed with a gigantic wave of conviction, or when it did not love Christ, and did not desire to make everybody happy, and was not willing to sacrifice its own happiness for the sake of others? Is not such a child a Christian? Are you going to judge a man by his experiences, or by the way in which he comes to them?

A man that has righteousness and peace in the Holy Ghost has religion. If some come to it by the plow and by the harrow, well and good; and if some come to it not by

the plow nor by the harrow, well and good. The result is the thing—not the process by which the result comes to pass. The kingdom of God is within you, in the form of Christian dispositions which you acquire through your religion. This is a very severe test, and a very cruel one.

We have seen what dispositions go to make up religion : now let us see what applications flow from the definitions or explanations which have been given.

A man may be an excellent churchman, and a poor Christian. The church test is not enough. We all know that a man who is reasonably moral ; who is tolerably kind ; who practices moderation in all things ; who likes his minister, and dines him on Sunday, and at other times ; who is liberal in paying his salary, and who, on the whole, is worldly-wise—we know that everybody says of such a man, “He is a Christian, he is a member of the church, he performs all his church duties ; and he belongs to the right church, and he is right.” The right church is the one that you belong to, always ! Men who serve the church with an ordinary degree of morality in their daily lives and conversations are esteemed as certainly Christians ; but a man may be good-natured, he may be an easy-going soul, and he may be amiable to the degree that he wants to live in peace and harmony with his minister, and those in the church, and his neighbors ; and he may never rise above that very common state which might be called an abdominal grace—for he has good digestion, and good health ; and therefore it is that he is good-natured. But a man may comply with all the requisitions of church life ; the ordinary tests of church life may be applied to him ; and yet he may be avaricious, and unduly ambitious, and jealous, and envious. A man may be a member of a church and not have in him the kingdom of God, which is not merely righteousness in the form of popular morality, but such a condition of the soul as issues in right doing rather than in wrong, and brings joy. No man can be joyful who is not harmonized with himself and his circumstances, and who is not filled with peace—a quality which is almost unknown in this jangling, noisy world. A man may pass well among religious people, and yet when he shall

knock at the gate of heaven and say, "Lord, Lord, open unto me," he will not be admitted. And when he remonstrates, and cries, "Lord, do you know who it is that you are keeping out? Why, I am the man who took care of your ministers on earth. I cast out devils, and spoke in your name. I did all manner of things"—then the voice within will answer, "You are nothing but a churchman. You have not the kingdom of God within you." Where are your graces? Where are the fruits of the Spirit? Where is the inside man? The outside man is very fine; the outside man is clean and comely; the outside man is clad in broadcloth and silks; the outside man is all right; but what is inside of you? Lusts unsubdued? uncontrolled appetites? hardness of heart? selfishness? discontent? envyings and jealousy? are these the contents of the kingdom within you? You may be a member of a thousand churches, and you could not enter the kingdom above with such dispositions.

It is not because I despise churches or churchmembership, that I say these things; for as schools are useful to popular intelligence, so these outward instrumentalities are useful to religion; but, as it would be absurd to worship a school-house as though it were an equivalent for education, so it would be absurd to worship a church as if that was the substance of religion. It is but the instrument by which religion is to be ministered to preserve it. And if you are a member of a church, what have you over and above your membership? What is the state of your disposition?

Then, too, the sectarian test must disturb some persons. Many feel reasonably secure because they are so certain that other folks will be damned. They believe in the Trinity; and they say, "That man don't—that miserable Arminian; that Arian; that low-down theologian; but I am at concert-pitch of orthodoxy." They say, "Why, that man believes not one single word in future and eternal punishment; and I do. I believe in hell, and in an eternity of it; and I believe that men are going there by myriads, and ought to go." They think because another man is so deficient in his belief on these subjects, that they are a great deal better than he is. That man may be sweet-tempered and gentle, he may be kind



in his disposition ; but he cannot stand the test of sectarianism or sect-life, and so he cannot train with the man who can stand this test. By strange inflections of reasoning one man believes that he is safe because another man is in danger. Men take care of their own sect ; and they are led to feel that those who believe in their doctrines, in their form of government, and in their mode of worship, have something to hope for, are reasonably well off, and are safe. For going to heaven in churches is like going on a journey in cars. Now, of cars, some are palace cars, some are sleeping cars, some are second-class cars, and some are third-class cars ; and it makes a great deal of difference which you ride in, so far as your comfort is concerned ; but it makes no difference in respect to getting to the end of your journey. Yet one sect of church people think that theirs is the right church, because they go in the palace cars. Others think that theirs must be the right church because they go in sleeping cars ; and others think that theirs must be the right one because the cars they go in are plain and rough, because they are not proud, but are democratic, because they do not have anything to do with style and the refinements of life. So the poor despise the rich, and the rich despise the poor ; and men are looking at each other everywhere out of their particular car.

I suppose that a man can go to heaven from a very fine house ; but not on account of his house. I suppose that a man who is rather stupid and sleepy can go to heaven : not, however, on account of his stupidity and sleepiness, but in spite of them. I suppose a man can go to heaven from a very coarse hut ; but not on account of the hut. The reason why any man goes to heaven is, that he has the kingdom of God in him, whether he is high or low ; whether he is in an orthodox sect, or in a heterodox church ; whether he believes much or little. The man who has that state of soul in him which is working out in righteousness of life, in kindliness of disposition toward men, and in a reverent life toward God, whose nature is breathed upon by the Holy Ghost, so that it seeks its origin again, and who is happy and joyful—you cannot damn such a man. You cannot damn a man in

whose soul is the kingdom of heaven ; for he would turn hell into a palace, and sing songs in the midst of perdition.

It is what you are, and not where you are, nor what you believe, that determines your future condition. What you believe is important; but it is only secondary to what you are. Your belief depends upon your father or mother and school-master, upon your early life and surroundings, upon what you hear preached, etc. ; but God works by nature as well as by society. He works by the morning, by the noon of the day, and by the night. He works by men (we do not know what they are doing one upon another); he works by all the industries of life ; he works by the economies of government; he works by the direct and indirect influences which go to make a man what he is ; he works outside as well as inside. There is neither Jew nor Gentile with him. All men are one people in his sight. The human family are God's, and he uses them all; and he employs their surroundings of every kind to produce character in them. A man may not have the Catechism ; but if he has the right character he does not need it. The Catechism is very admirable for educating men into the right state of mind ; but if they are already in the right state of mind, they can get along without the Catechism. A man may learn mathematics without going to West Point ; and if he does, he does not need to go there for that purpose. Ordinarily, men make themselves intelligent through appointed instruments; but many slaves have learned to read on their bellies, with a pine-knot for a candle ; and having learned to read thus, it is not essential that they should go to a school or a college to learn to read. And yet, no one would say that everybody had better lie down on his belly to learn to read because one out of ten thousand did so.

Ordinarily, creeds and ordinances are blessed to the awakening and conversion and education of men ; and yet there are those throughout the community who have never gone through these processes, but who have been brought up through various influences into the kingdom of God ; and they are safe. They are not imperiled because they did not go through such and such experiences. If they have the kingdom of heaven in them, they are safe by reason of its

quality. And though they have gone through all the right roads, if they have failed to pluck the fruits of the Spirit they are not safe. All the regulation processes of themselves cannot save you. It is not how you got it, but whether you have got it—the kingdom of heaven—that determines your happiness and your salvableness.

That which is true in respect to sectarianism and churchism is also true in respect to theology. Though I have partly discussed that in considering the other questions, there are some things which I did not take into account. When the Jews reasoned on religion, they brought to bear upon it the peculiarities of their race-stock. They looked at it from the Jewish standpoint; and that was the standpoint of profound emotion or moral feeling. When the Greeks brought their mind to the subject of religion, they, in looking at it, brought the peculiarities of the Greek race-stock, which were intellectual and ascetic, to bear upon it. They turned religion out of an emotion into an idea or philosophy. You cannot find any philosophy in the Old Testament, any more than you can find goats and sheep; but you can find wool there, plenty of it; and the Greeks took the wool, and spun it, and wove it, and made it into garments, and called that religion. The Greek mind, in coming to religion, organized a theological system, as it respects the Godhead particularly; and so far as it was merely a matter of intellection we are indebted to the Greek mind. But the Romans brought the peculiarities of the Roman race-stock to the subject of religion; and they looked at it from their standpoint. They were a peculiar people, and knew how to organize men into solid communities, and how to govern them by law; and they were the only ones that could do it. Law and government were the great peculiarities of the Roman mind. The Jewish mind developed profound moral sentiment; the Greek mind intellectual and speculative ideas, and the Roman mind the machinery of religion—the organization of churches and a body of ministers; and we have derived through these three sources elements which are still in the world, and about which men are perpetually quarreling with each other.

Now, it is a good thing, often, to have profound emotion



without philosophy ; it is a good thing to have philosophy, often, without profound emotion ; and it is often a good thing to have organization ; but neither organization nor philosophy nor moral sentiment is in itself a substitute for living, personal character. They are all good just so far as they influence personal character, but they are good for nothing to any individual if they do not influence his personal character. No man is worth anything except so far as he has developed in him his sweeter graces of the Divine nature. Just as much of God as is in you makes you valuable ; and by as much as you are deficient in the divine elements, no matter what your culture or position or natural endowments may be, you are poor and miserable, and in need of all things.

There is another element that I wish to call your attention to—namely, the fact that the New Testament descriptions of religion, all of them, represent it as unstormed and full of tranquillity and beauty. In the contemplation of our dear Master, and particularly in the contemplation of that noblest of modern Jews, St. Paul, religion is a thing of joy. It is full of cheer, full of courtesy, full of generosity, and full of magnanimity. It makes a perfect gentleman. You cannot find anywhere else in all the world so perfect a description of a real gentleman as that which is contained in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians. Put *politeness* or *gentleness* in the place of “charity,” and you have there the most perfect description of what it is to be a gentleman. We say a *Christian* gentleman ; but that is tautology. God is the only Gentleman ; and we are gentlemen proximately just in proportion as we have nobility, sweetness, grace, delicacy, refinement, consideration for others, and the power of producing happiness spontaneously and unconsciously, as well as voluntarily. These qualities constitute the divine nature. The overflow of God is the virtue of mankind. The divine life is all that is beautiful in its developments of man. We have the soil of flesh ; into that is thrown the seed of the Spirit ; and out of it comes Christian grace in blossom and in fruit, under the influence of the divine mind, acting in and on our minds.

The delineations of Christian experience in the New Testament are all cheerful, hopeful, courageous. "Well," you say, "is it so? Was Christ's life an epitome?" You are under a great misapprehension if you think that Christ, except when going through his passion, was an unhappy man. I have read with great care and scrutiny the history of his early life; and I am satisfied that except during the last thirty days of his career, when he suffered for sacrificial purposes, he was happy. The early part of Christ's life was a beautiful one. He was a noble Jew, and he was admired of his countrymen, not because they thought him to be, in the way that we do, abstractly a divine personage, but because they thought him to be about the greatest specimen of a Jew that had ever appeared in their nation. He was a prophet to them. Why was he so much to them? Because he typified the best things which had been known in the Jewish religion for a thousand years. He stood as a glowing example of their ideals. They were mistaken in their supposition that he was to be at the head of their physical kingdom, and to add to their power, dominating and governing in a material point of view; but he was their ideal so far as manhood and patriotism were concerned. In all his early years he was loved and followed. He had that which made every man happy. He possessed the power to make men happy with the look of his eye. He had the power of teaching men to extract honey from rebuke and sorrow. He had power to dry the tear of bereavement, and to assuage the pain of suffering. He had the power to carpet the earth with flowers. He had the power to quiet the storm. Light and darkness were his ministers of mercy. Where he went men felt the breath of spring, the balm of summer, and the glory and richness of autumn. And he was happy during the early part of his life. In the latter part, it is true, he went through an experience of suffering and grief that he might bear the sins of many; but his life as a whole was a beautiful exemplification of how happy religion ought to make men.

Take the apostles. Of all men of their time, they were the most joyful. Though you shall find in the writings of Paul declarations of care, and anxiety, and burdens in con-

nection with the churches, yet I will defy anybody to find anywhere such a display of wholesome feelings as he exhibits in the delineation of his life. He speaks of it as if it were a triumphant campaign; as if it were a career of victory; as if it were a life garlanded and honored. Men were called from darkness to light; they were called from prisons to liberty; they were called from being slaves to being friends; they were called to the bosom of love. Eminently this was the case of the apostles; and they were joyful men.

“Well,” you will say, “what do you mean by the cross and the burden? Does not Christ say that you must take up the cross and follow him? Does he not say that you shall suffer tribulation?” Yes, that is so. Suppose I go into a malarial district where persons are shaking with chills and fever, and say to them, “You cannot expect to be healthy and happy except by a good deal of suffering. You must take a good deal of bitter medicine. Unless you do that, you cannot enter into the kingdom of health;” and suppose some one, hearing me preach that, should say, “Mr. Beecher does not believe in health where there is an absence of pain and the presence of joy.” I say that to be healthy those persons must suffer; and he thinks that I mean to teach that suffering is indispensable to enjoyment. Now, when men are told to bear the cross, it is that they may reach a condition such that they can leave the cross and the burden behind them, or carry them with cheerfulness and joy. There is not a Christian mother here who does not know that in carrying the cross we end by being carried on it. We are selfish; and it is not easy to get over our selfishness; but when we begin to get over it, do not we find joy? We are proud; and there must be suffering if we are going to conquer pride. Who can do anything that is worth doing without experiencing more or less attrition? but when it is reached, who will not say that its value is more than enough to compensate for the discomfort which it occasioned?

In Christian life, the turning our bad habits into good ones, the changing our selfishness into benevolence, the converting our unloveliness into loveliness, the working right out of wrong, leads us through a way that is often dark, and



cross-bearing and burden-bearing ; but the moment we are successful, we leave the burden and the cross, and go on our way rejoicing. The process of education toward good involves pain ; suffering is incidentally an instrument which belongs to the process of getting well ; but when a person has attained that which is good, when a person has got well, then the pain and the suffering disappear.

Therefore, I beg you to notice wherein the religion of the world is different from the religion of the New Testament. The religion of the New Testament is the fruit of the Spirit, the kingdom of God, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Now, see how large a number of ascetics there is in the world. See how many men think that if a man has become religious, he must carry a long face—that he must be very sober. Here is a man that used to be jolly, and could tell a good story, and afforded much innocent enjoyment for those around about him ; but he joins the church ; and then he feels that he must not tell any more stories, and he becomes very serious, and casts a gloom over the society in which he moves. If a man joins the church as the result of a new life begun in him, and goes out among people, and is lively and cheerful in things innocent, as he was before he became a Christian, people look upon him askance and say, "I am afraid that man has deceived himself." A young woman is beautiful and joyous, and full of a hundred sweet fancies that are harmless and eminently desirable, and she is brought into the church, and a great many people watch her, and say, "I want to see if she laughs as much as she used to. I am afraid that she went in under an impulse of feeling. I am afraid that grace is not going to live in her." Why? Because she is not despondent. Because she retains her gayety and exuberance of spirits. If she were sad, and less happy, and were less pleasant to other people, they would think that she was truly converted. Many a man lays aside, on going into the church, his wit and mirth, and says, "I must be sober, because the Bible commands me to be sober ;" but when the Bible says, "Be sober," it means that you must not get drunk. It has no reference to the other kind of sober at all.

The Bible exhorts men to rejoice. It says, "Rejoice in the Lord;" and then, as if something had been forgotten, it says, "Again I say rejoice." The nature of religion is joyful. It is one of the disclosures of its nature that men are living in such relations to God and to their fellow-men that they are to be exultant in their happiness.

Oh! That they who are young and full of gayety would sanctify it, and keep it, and make it better, and more radiant, and let it reflect upon others, through the desire to make them happier, which is the dominant desire of God. Rejoice, laugh, let your fancy work out in a thousand ways for the enlivening of those of your fellow-men who are dull and well-nigh dead in their feelings. He who has wit has a gift of God. He who has humor has a power of enlightening men which many teachers lack. He who, among the men with whom he works, can whistle, or can play an instrument so as to stir up their emotions, has the ability to lift them out of sordid, carking cares and degrading appetites. He is not a full-orbed Christian; but he has something that belongs to Christianity; and instead of throwing it away he should consecrate it and use it. There is a wind of laughing that may swell the sails of those who are going to heaven as well as a wind of groaning.

The ascetic religion which has come down to us through mediæval influences and Puritanic influences is not to be despised. It is good in its place. The Puritans are to be revered; but not for their warts, not for their faults, but for their excellences. I am the son of a Puritan, and I revere the Puritans as the chiefest among men; but I do not believe in their asceticism or acerbities for our time, though they were adapted to the times in which they lived. We must not imitate the errors of our parents because we do their virtues; and I think the time will come when religion will embrace the sweetest and most joy-inspiring elements of our nature.

Beware, then, of a religion that is nothing but formal propriety. Beware of men who keep away from faults, but do not develop excellences. Beware of men who damn all evils in others that they are not liable to, and who are lenient

toward those evils to which they are liable. Beware of men in whom the critical faculty is strong ; men who do not need spectacles on their eyes to enable them to see everything that is wrong—but who see it instinctively.

I notice that my doves, of which there are flocks circling round and round and round my farm, never come down to earth because there is carrion there, and that they never see it ; but that if a crow or a raven is swinging in the air, and a dead lamb is over the fence, he will see it, and will pass by everything that is healthy for this one stinking carcass. There are doves in the church, and there are ravens there.

Now, when the Spirit of God came down upon Christ, it came upon him as a dove ; and the spirit of charity, that thinks no evil, that does not love suspicion, that hates to think harm of anybody, that is slow to detect evil in men—that is the spirit of religion ; and those who have it are Christians ; whereas, those who are censorious, who are exacting, who do not have much pleasure themselves, who are stridulous, unmusical, and unrich in soul and in faculty, and are unsympathetic toward the young, and are always watching for their faults—do not take such persons as your models. Do not believe that termagantism is Christianity.

There is one other line of thought that I would like to pursue ; but I am afraid that the talk which I have made to you thus far will lead a great many of you to say, “ Now, Mr. Beecher is making religion just as natural and easy as he can. He is drawing in a great crowd to hear him, by smoothing religion over. He is preaching so that everybody will come, pell mell, thinking that they are religious. He is not making religion hard enough of attainment.”

My dearly beloved, just try to be what I have been describing a true religion to be, and you will find it hard enough. I do not mean to block up the way of expectation. Let a man who has strong health, who has a resolute will, who is a natural leader, and who has the power to use men—let him so control his spirit of domination that he shall become a brother instead of a slave-master ; and if he finds it easy he will be the first man on the face of the globe that ever found it easy. Try to control that protean selfishness



which is in your nature, and which visits you earliest in the morning and latest at night. Instead of yielding to the disposition to secure your own interests rather than those of others ; instead of taking on you the thousand forms of competition which exist in business, attempt to act for one single month according to the Golden Rule of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Fulfill the command, "Bear ye one another's burdens"—their burdens being their faults. Bear with men's bad tempers, and help them to bear them. Bear with men's stinginess. Do not revile nor kick them : help them. It is a fault which is dragging them down ; and do you help them rise above it. Bear one another's soul-burdens and disposition-burdens. Try that, and see whether I have made religion easy. Endeavor to attain the result which I have attempted to depict, and see whether it is not hard. Undertake to develop in yourself the qualities of true piety, as I have described them, and see how easy it is. I have striven to show what the kingdom of God in you is ; I have tried to take away all misconceptions of it, and to make the thing itself seem lustrous and desirable ; I have endeavored to make its results appear glorious ; but I do not hesitate to tell you that the work of educating a man's faculties to the higher plane, and to nobler generousities, to more disinterested benevolence, to reverence and love for God, and to a universal kindness toward men, is the most serious task to which a man ever addressed himself, and I should be without hope and expectation of benefit if it were not a part of the mission of the divine Spirit to send down the influence of God to all who are susceptible to it for their guidance and assistance.

I am always pained to hear ministers preach in such a way as to discourage men. They say, "Now, remember, my friends, oh remember, that in all your endeavors to be pious, you cannot do anything of yourself. Remember that you must depend upon the Spirit of God." The effect of that is to repel men from religion ; but I say to you, ye that want to be better, ye that wish to rise higher, Do not be discouraged. When you have put forth all your strength, you have not exhausted the whole of the strength that there is

for you. There is over you a loving Spirit ; and every time you think once for yourself, He thinks twice for you. Every time you make an effort, he duplicates and quadruples that effort. It is because there is this loving, helpful God that there is any hope that men will rise from animalism, and become heirs of immortality. It is because God works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure, that I am encouraged to say, "Work out your own salvation."

Remember, then, that if you stumble and fall, you are to get up again. Do not say, "God is discouraged with me." Did you ever know a mother that ceased to have patience with her children ? I have known women who took to themselves elect husbands that fell from the grace which they thought they saw in them, and went down into vulgarity, into vice, and into the most loathsome forms of filthy intemperance. If there is a hell on earth, it is where a noble-hearted woman, refined and conscience-inspired, is compelled to lie by the side of a grunting brute, and her house is darkened by his midnight disposition ; and yet the love which many a woman had for such a man when she knew him cannot be extinguished ; and over all the loathsomeness of the present there is still the memory of that old love. And when, at last, he dies, and all the town takes a long breath, and says, "Thank God, he is gone," she, alone, says, "Oh, you did not know him—you did not know him : there was good in him before the tempter took him." And has there ever a woman been born yet that was as good as God ? Is there a mother or a wife that has as deep tenderness and as long-suffering love as God has ?

If you have tried a hundred times, and failed, try again, and keep trying. There is hope for the proud ; there is hope for the selfish ; there is hope for the envious ; there is hope for all men. There is not a sinner that lives for whom there is not hope ; but it is because God is so gracious, and so gentle, and so near, and so helpful. Hope in God, and he will add flower to flower in your garden, and fruit to fruit in your orchard, until at last the kingdom of God shall be so developed in you that you will be borne to the upper realm, and be unfolded in the kingdom of heaven.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

EVER-BLESSED God, thou art forevermore blessing; and thou art happy because thou art making so many happy. Thou dost live rejoicingly because thy life kindles the life of so many creatures. We cannot understand thee. By searching we can never compass thy being, nor find out the condition in which thou dost dwell, so high art thou above all mortal experiences in the effluence of thy heavenly spirit of love. Thou art raised above the selfishness and the pride and the worldiness of this mortal state. Nor shall we see thee as thou art until we stand in Zion and before God. But, as we know, thou art infinite truth, infinite purity, infinite goodness, and all the springs of joy in us shall be touched when we draw near to thee. All who are around about thee rejoice, and rejoice evermore.

We have made contribution to thy heavenly host. With thee are our beloved, gone before. We parted from them with tears; but we think of them with smiles. For us is the storm, and the rude way, and the hard world; but for them are the rejoicing heaven and the untempting delight. We are glad that their labors are over.

Our children are with thee; not one of them is lost; and the little feet that could not find the paths of this life, the little hands that could not make their way amidst the toils of this lower sphere, are safe. There is not a single wandering one. They are better cared for with thee than mother-heart or father-heart could ever have cared for them on earth. We thank thee for their rest and triumph; and we humbly believe that through the ministration of thy Spirit, and the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we, too, like them, may be brought safely out of temptation, weakness, and sins, and peril of every kind, and may abide with them again, to be separated from them no more forever.

Everlasting thanks be unto thee, thou loving God, for all the purposes of mercy which are yet unrevealed, and which when unrolled shall be more than enough for all the whole universe. Like the sun, thou dost not give by measure, but dost pour out of thine infinite fullness an overflow transcending all want. We rejoice in thee, and pray that thy Spirit may be in us, and that though we are in lower places and in smaller spheres we may learn how to shine upon others, and how to pour happiness abroad, giving to all something. As even the humblest flowers breathe fragrance unconsciously, so may we, by kindness, by gentleness, by meekness, by humility, by loveliness, breathe the Spirit of our Saviour, and interpret to men the glory of that God whom they neglect or reject, and bring him near to their conscience.

We pray that thy blessing may rest, to-day, upon this great throng that is gathered together in the wilderness. Oh! may it prove true that from the mountains comes their help. May they find in thy presence here something more precious to them than jewels or than gold. May they take some fruit that shall grow, living evermore in them; that shall make their life better; that shall make the way of their thought toward God easier; and that

shall make their hope and their aspiration through Jesus Christ more earnest and genuine.

We pray that thou wilt bless adversity in all its forms, in the household; in business affairs; by the wayside; in all the relations of life. Grant that our dealing with thy people, and with all that are around about us here, may be blessed to their spiritual edification. And we pray that thou wilt bless, not only those that are here gathered together, but the great multitudes who are left behind. We bring them in the arms of faith; and we implore for them that which we ask for ourselves.

And we pray that thy kingdom may come, and that thy will may be done in all the nations of the earth. May the time soon come when the name of Jesus shall be sweet to every one, and his Spirit shall be breathed into the hearts of all. Thus may thy will be established throughout the earth in purity, in truth, and in goodness.

Wilt thou hear us in these our petitions, and answer us, not because we are worthy, but for the sake of Jesus, our Lord and Master; to whom, with the Father and the Spirit, shall be praises unceasing. *Amen.*



## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we beseech of thee that thy kingdom may shine upon us, and upon all that we have—upon our households and upon our business; but chiefly upon our endeavors to live more divinely. Lift us above carnal passions and appetites. Lift us above discouragements and despondencies. Lift us above empty moralities. Lift us above mere peace, and give us life ever fresh, and ever developing in new lines, in the direction of love and joy. Bring us to thyself by making our life divine.

Now, may thy blessing rest upon all. May those who came despondent go away with a secret joy. May those who came without light bear with them the illumination of hope and cheer. May we have fellowship and gladness one with another. And bring us all, at last, to heaven and to Mount Zion, the city of the living God.

And to thy name shall be the praise of our salvation, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*



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